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Pakistan's Endgame in Kashmir: India's Options

D. Suba Chandran

Two years have been completed since the peace process between India and Pakistan began in October 2003. Numerous meetings have taken place at the official, back channel and track II levels between the two countries. Significant initiatives have been made in and on Kashmir, which include the bus service between Muzaffarabad and Srinagar, change of government in J&K, allowing the separatist leaders and journalists to visit both sides. A devastating earthquake in October 2005, has reduced the distance between the two countries, if not brought them together.

Where does Kashmir figure today? What is Pakistan's endgame in Kashmir? Is the endgame shared by every actor, who has been involved in the conflict? Has there been a change in their objective and strategy towards Kashmir? What options does India have? This article aims to analyse these questions.

Pakistan's Kashmir Policy: An Analysis

What does Pakistan want in Kashmir? What would Pakistan settle for?¹ Who runs Pakistan's Kashmir policy? What role does *jihad* and cross-border terrorism play in Pakistan's strategy? These questions need to be probed first before examining the options India has in dealing with Pakistan on Kashmir.

Pakistan's Endgame in Kashmir

There is a unanimous understanding inside Pakistan that India would never be able to physically integrate the entire J&K and the Kashmiris emotionally into the Indian mainstream. This perception is due to continuous propaganda by Pakistan, of human rights violations in Kashmir perpetrated by the Indian security forces. This perception is invariably reasserted by every single

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writer in Pakistan in his/her columns in leading newspapers – both in English and vernacular languages. Besides the state propaganda and discussion outside on Kashmir, the popular perceptions have also been shaped by statements and visits by the elite Kashmiri leadership from Srinagar, mainly belonging to the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC). The fact that this elite leadership represents the perceptions of Srinagar and not even the entire valley has never been understood and perhaps would never in the coming years. Outside the Valley, in the regions of Jammu, Ladakh and even in Rajouri, Poonch and Doda, this leadership, whom Pakistanis believe as “true representatives” of Kashmir have no standing. Undoubtedly, the Hurriyat represents a section of Kashmiri opinion, but could never become “the sole spokesman” for Kashmir. The Hurriyat is divided vertically and also horizontally. Even the component parties of the Hurriyat are divided among themselves.

Second, like the Hurriyat, Srinagaris also represent a section of Kashmiri opinion and do not represent the entire Kashmir Valley. Unfortunately in Pakistan, perspectives from Srinagar are seen as reflective of entire J&K. Objectives, aspirations and demands of the Srinagar population are vastly different from those of rural Kashmir; this would never be understood in Pakistan. An illustration of this point would be the 2002 election for the State legislative assembly. Srinagar polled the least number of votes around 10 per cent, whereas the rest of Kashmir polled more than 40 per cent.² While the majority in and around Srinagar would not like to be part of India politically and emotionally, the same cannot be said of those outside Srinagar. The rest in the Valley may not want to be a part of India emotionally, but would be willing to live with it politically as long as the State and Union governments are able to provide them good governance.

What is Pakistan’s endgame in beliefs and expectations on Kashmir? Would Pakistan agree to Kashmir becoming an independent entity? A difference needs to be made at what has been stated and believed at official, rhetorical and popular levels. At popular and rhetorical levels, there has always been an emphasis on independent Kashmir. However, the state, especially the military, does not believe in the same.

There has been an open shift at the official level on the idea of independent Kashmir. General Musharraf in 2003 announced that Pakistan would not insist on implementing the UN Security Council (UNSC) resolution.³ The UNSC resolution of 1948 focused on three issues – ceasefire,

withdrawal of troops – regular and irregular by Pakistan, and plebiscite in Kashmir.⁴ While the ceasefire came into operation immediately, the second clause in terms of withdrawal of troops never materialized. The third clause of determining the wishes of the people of Kashmir became the “principled stand” of Kashmir since the 1950s.

Abandoning the UNSC resolution on Kashmir was stated in official circles as a “concession” on Kashmir by Pakistan. Though a section opposed abandoning its “principled stand”, not many outside believed that Pakistan ever wanted Kashmir to be an independent state. Phrases such as “principled stand” and “independent Kashmir” have always been a political mask for Pakistan’s real objectives in Kashmir. The International Crisis Group (ICG) report on Kashmir mentioned: “Although Islamabad pays lip service to the right of Kashmiris to determine their own future, its official policy rejects a possible ‘third option’ of independence. In Islamabad’s view, an independent Kashmir is not acceptable because it would undermine Pakistan’s interests”⁵.

Pakistan is well aware that, if given an opportunity to express their will, Kashmiris would opt for independence and never for Pakistan. Outside the independence option, Kashmiris would prefer to stay with India rather than with Pakistan, as substantiated by the MORI survey in 2002.⁶ Besides, this survey also mentioned, “overall, two-thirds of people in Jammu and Kashmir take the view that Pakistan’s involvement in the region for the last decade has been bad. Only 15 per cent believe it has been good for the region, while 18 per cent say it has made no real difference.”⁷

Besides Kashmiris, there is no support for a plebiscite even at the global level. Kofi Annan, the UN Secretary General publicly stated that the UN resolutions on Kashmir have become irrelevant. Neither the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) nor China, on whose support Pakistan depend on, any more agree that plebiscite is an option.⁸ The military establishment now seems to have understood the reality in Kashmir and accordingly has changed its approach. India, while framing its response to Pakistan, should keep this reality in mind. General Musharraf’s statement on UN resolutions in December 2003 is not a concession but an admission of reality.

The ICG report made a curious observation. On the question of plebiscite and independence it stated: “At the very most, Pakistan might accept an option of independence for only the Kashmir Valley and some Muslim majority areas of Jammu, through for example, a regional referendum held under US

auspices". Would Pakistan settle for a partial referendum and independence? Perhaps, as the Kashmir policy of Pakistan has always been aimed at taking the Valley away from India. Three proposals that were floated in recent years "LoC Plus" or, "Chenab Formula", and "Regional Referendum", and more recently, "self-rule" are based on these premises.

First the idea of LoC Plus, which was put forward more clearly as the Chenab Formula.⁹ According to Niaz Naik, the Chenab formula was discussed with R.K. Mishra when both were engaged in back channel diplomacy in 1999, immediately after the Lahore summit.¹⁰ The Chenab formula, according to Niaz Naik goes, as follows:

During an evening discussion on 30 March (1999), I offered a compromise solution. It was to *partition* the Indian portion of Jammu and Kashmir; the Valley of Kashmir would be given to Pakistan, the rest to India. The division, I explained to Mishra, had to be made along easily identifiable geographic features. I suggested that the Chenab River was possibly a suitable natural dividing line. Mishra confessed that he was uncertain of Kashmir's geography and needed more specific details.¹¹

The proposal was again emphasized in 2003, but this time by Sardar Sikandar Hayat Khan, the Prime Minister of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, who is seen closer to the military establishment hence parroting the latter's perceptions. According to Sardar Khan, such a decision along the Chenab River would be "an honourable and amicable solution to the long-standing dispute"¹².

A proposal to have regional referendums was made later by General Musharraf himself in October 2004. At a meeting with the editors he observed:

Take Kashmir in its entirety. It has seven regions. Two of the regions are in Pakistan and five are in India. In my view, identify a region, whether it is the whole or seven or part, I do not know. Identify the region, demilitarize the region forever and change its status The status can be independence, condominium where there can be a joint control or there can be [a] UN mandate.¹³

Besides these proposals, there have been several statements made by Musharraf in the recent months. In April 2005, at a meeting with the editors

in New Delhi, Musharraf proposed “involving the people of Kashmir” in the final solution, generating public debate and public support. He also mentioned other options such as independence, self-governance, autonomy, joint control and joint management. On LoC and the border he stated, “Yes, boundaries can’t be altered”, however proceeded further and confirmed that the “Line of Control (LoC) can’t also be accepted as the final solution” but emphasized boundaries becoming irrelevant.¹⁴ After the earthquake in October 2005, he made a statement on making the LoC irrelevant.¹⁵ Clearly these pronouncements stress three issues – involving the people of Kashmir, not accepting the LoC as a permanent border, but making it irrelevant. Recently, Pakistan emphasized “self-rule”, which is being interpreted differently by different actors. It is not clear what he meant by this, hence it would be premature to comment on this proposal.

Besides the Pakistani state, India should also take into account the presence of armed non-state actors (NSAs) with independent objectives. There is no guarantee that an understanding reached with Pakistan would be agreeable to the militant and *jihadi* groups and their supporters in Pakistan and Kashmir.

There are two categories of the NSAs, whose presence, objectives and ability to act independent of Pakistan should be taken into account. The first category comprises the *jihadi* groups led by the *Lashkar-e-Toiba* and *Jaish-e-Mohammad*. These groups have different objectives than their erstwhile masters – the ISI and Pakistan’s military. They have been fighting for a religious and not political cause. Kashmir is a means to achieve broader goals of establishing an Islamic caliphate.¹⁶ These groups have been mobilizing funds on their own both inside Pakistan and outside it.

Could this section act without the help of Pakistan’s ISI/military? Neither for economic support nor military assistance, they need the Pakistani military’s help. The extent and lethality of their operations may vary, but if these groups decide to act against political or military leadership in Pakistan, they could very well continue to do so. If India, with all its intentions cannot prevent ex-filtration, would Pakistan be able to do the same? These groups could carry out militant attacks in Kashmir even without any active support from Pakistan’s establishment, as has been happening within that country.¹⁷ No doubt, the state has influence over these groups, but it is limited and likely to reduce further in the coming days.

The second category comprises militant groups led by *Hizbul Mujahideen*. These groups have been fighting for a political cause – an independent Kashmir, whose support comes primarily from the Pakistani state, Kashmiri political groups, especially belonging to Geelani's Hurriyat and the Kashmiri diaspora. For military assistance, they are heavily dependent on their masters in Pakistan. Without Pakistan's active support, these groups may not be able to sustain themselves.

To conclude, Pakistan's endgame in Kashmir would be based on the following: an independent Kashmir is not an option for Pakistan. So is converting the LoC into an international border. It would also never agree to let the Kashmir Valley remain with India. Perhaps a semi-autonomous Kashmir Valley, but not under total control of India.¹⁸ It would be willing to settle for LoC Plus, which includes the Kashmir Valley, in part or whole.

India's options in dealing with Pakistan need to be based on the above considerations. Is there a space in between, which India could manoeuvre? If there is no such space available, then could India create the same through political, economic, military and diplomatic pressure? Before examining India's options vis-à-vis Pakistan in J&K, two issues need to be discussed. First, who runs Pakistan's Kashmir policy and second, what would be Pakistan's strategy vis-à-vis cross-border terrorism in dealing with India?

Pakistan's Kashmir Policy: Builders and Movers

Besides knowing the objectives of Pakistan's Kashmir policy, India should also understand who decides, builds and runs Pakistan's Kashmir policy. The ICG report made a candid observation on this aspect. It said:

The military high command and the military's intelligence agency, the Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate, dominate policy on Kashmir. The civil bureaucracy, represented by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is primarily responsible for implementing Kashmir policy at the diplomatic level In the event of any difference between civil and military bureaucracies over the direction or execution of foreign policy, the military and ISI points of view are likely to prevail.¹⁹

Within the military, the ISI in particular, pursues Pakistan's Kashmir policy. There have been apprehensions in India about the ISI being a separate entity or a "rogue" one functioning independently on its own on Kashmir.

This is highly unlikely, as the ICG report observed that the ISI is composed of serving military officials “who are inducted into the agency from all over the armed forces for a fixed tenure”, who are “an integral part of the regular officer corps, and their promotions, indeed their professional survival depends on their ability to obey orders, there is no incentive to flout the military chain of command”.²⁰

Clearly the military runs Pakistan's Kashmir policy and there are no rogue elements within the Army or ISI who act independently. This should also clear another myth on the role of political parties or the general population. General Musharraf's statement which he made on 12 January 2002 is highly debatable on whether Kashmir runs in Pakistan's blood. Kashmir, undoubtedly served as a mobilizing factor for political purposes inside Pakistan, but this is no more the case. Balochistan, NWFP and Sind have their own problems and it is unlikely that Kashmir would elicit the same kind of response any more. A review of events and their importance in Pakistan in the mid-1990s till the Kargil war would reveal that Kashmir never figured in the security debates of the Pakistani public. A poll conducted by a leading monthly in 1997 on fifty years of Pakistan's independence revealed that issues of employment, poverty and water were seen as more important than Kashmir. Kashmir did not either figure in the 1997 election; the election campaign focused more on corruption and good governance. Even after Sharif's landslide victory, Pakistan was fighting internally on social, economic and political issues; and to a large extent, Kashmir was almost forgotten. It is no coincidence then that militancy came down in Kashmir during this period and it was one of the reasons for Pakistan's military planning in Kargil.²¹

If the military runs Pakistan's Kashmir policy, would it like to settle the issue? Many in India believe Kashmir provides the rationale for Pakistan military's existence; some even extend the argument to emphasize that Kashmir provides a rationale for the very existence of Pakistan. If one is to go by this argument, then it is easier to conclude that it is not in the interests of the military in Pakistan to agree to resolve the Kashmir conflict. Perhaps there is a need to review this perception in India. The Pakistani military's threat perceptions towards India have been defined more by what happened in 1971 and not because of what happened in 1947–48. In other words, the military defeat in 1971 and the subsequent breaking up of Pakistan that would provide the reasons for the military's continued hostility than Kashmir. Kashmir is only a means and not the reason to bleed India.

Cross-border Terrorism and Jihad: Strategy but not Objective

Where does cross-border terrorism and *jihad* fit into the Pakistani military's approach towards India? For Pakistan, supporting terrorism and *jihad* is a primary strategy aimed at two objectives – to keep the conflict alive in Kashmir, so as to force India to negotiate to Pakistan's advantage; and to bleed India, especially in Kashmir.

Pakistan believes that the *jihadis* and militants in Kashmir are its trump card, without which India would never negotiate with it. It also believes that the higher the threat and intensity of *jihad* and terrorism in Kashmir, the greater the chance of India negotiating. Pakistan would never stop supporting these elements and it is unlikely that it would do so during the current peace process.

A reference needs to be made on the recent efforts made by Musharraf in tackling extremism inside Pakistan. The extremist groups in Pakistan could be broadly divided into two groups – those who belong and support the Al Qaeda and Taliban; and those who are fighting in Kashmir. The former comes primarily from the NWFP and Karachi, while the latter belong to Punjab and rural Sind. There has been intense pressure from the international community to take proactive measures against extremism, which is primarily focused on the first group. It was this group which has international linkages with the Al Qaeda and also responsible for attacks against Musharraf. General Musharraf's efforts against extremism inside Pakistan were targeted primarily against these Al Qaeda and Taliban elements.

The second group consisting of the *Lashkar-e-Toiba* and the *Jaish-e-Mohammad* though has linkages with the Al Qaeda and Taliban, they were less engaged in local *jihad* and also against Musharraf. They primarily focus their *jihadi* activities in Kashmir; Musharraf never took serious steps to control them. Though they have been banned, they are acting under other names and are collecting funds, recruiting new people and have camps in Pakistan and PoK. It is highly unlikely that Musharraf would ever initiate any serious action against these groups.

At any given time, the Pakistani military could increase or decrease the level of militancy and hence the level of bleeding in Kashmir. If there are strong reactions from India or from the international community, militancy would be kept under check for a short time. Musharraf's efforts against reducing militancy after his speech on 12 January 2002 and after the Kaluchak

attack should be seen from this perspective. Increasing and decreasing militancy in Kashmir is a tactical strategy for Pakistan depending on its long-term interests. If India is willing to engage Pakistan politically, militancy would decline; if India goes slow in the process, there would be a sudden spurt in militancy for a short period. However, this hold over *jihadi* and militant groups by Pakistan is not absolute. As discussed earlier, control over *jiha*d groups, especially the *Lashkar* and *Jaish* has been waning in recent years.

Kashmir Today

Ever since the peace process began in October 2003, there have been significant changes in Kashmir. This includes all the regions – Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh in India and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (referred by Pakistan as “*Azad*” Kashmir) and the northern areas. These changes need to be grasped, in order to pursue policies and strategies accordingly. The changes can broadly be categorized into three sections in terms of changes inside Kashmir, changes in Pakistan’s Kashmir policy, and the role of *jihadi* forces and the support base in Pakistan and PoK before and after the earthquake.

Changes within Kashmir

There have been numerous intra-Kashmiri exchanges at the political and societal levels, which have brought various groups together.²² These meetings have also resulted in understanding the differences in perceptions and objectives amongst the various sections. Much before the earthquake there have been perceptible changes amongst the Kashmiris and the separatist leadership. The changes in rural Kashmir were more visible, as was reflected in their voting during the 2002 election.

Amongst the leadership, mainstream leaders welcomed changes, while there was a limited change amongst the moderate faction of the Hurriyat led by Mirwaiz Farooq. The latter is willing to explore the possibilities of alternative approaches.²³ When Pakistan proposed self-rule and demilitarization, the moderate faction urged India to look into them seriously.²⁴ The Mirwaiz faction, now seems to focus more on the process rather than the end game. At a meeting recently, Mirwaiz had suggested demilitarization by India and Pakistan, ceasefire by the militants leading to a consensus

amongst people.²⁵ Sardar Qayum Khan, former President of PoK in September 2005 publicly agreed that independent Kashmir is not going to be an option, at least for the next hundred years.²⁶ It is only Geelani and a few leaders who dream about UN resolutions, plebiscite and independence.²⁷

Changes in Pakistan's Kashmir Policy

There has been a change in Pakistan's strategy towards limited accommodation, for which Musharraf should be credited. The change has taken place primarily on what would be the future status of Kashmir. As seen above, Pakistan has given up its rhetoric on independent Kashmir as an option. Musharraf has given up the traditional Pakistani emphasis on UNSC resolutions; now Kashmir would be either with India or Pakistan or divided by both. -In November 2005, the Prime Minister of Pakistan spoke about "self-governance" and "self-rule".

Giving up its support for an independent Kashmir would also mean Pakistan distancing itself from those Kashmiris who have been fighting for the same. The recent shift in Pakistan's tacit support to Mirwaiz Farooq and ignoring Syed Ali Geelani is a part of this change. It needs to be seen whether the *Hizbul Mujahideen*, which has been supporting Geelani would also be discarded by Pakistan. Alternatively, the Hizbul would even be split; already there has been one between Syed Salahuddin and Abdul Majid Dar, leading to the latter's assassination. Without Pakistan's active support, Hizbul and Syed Salahuddin would not be able to sustain a militant movement for more than two months. It is likely that a section within the *Hizbul* would be willing to enter into a dialogue with India.

Changes in Jihadi Structure and Support

The earthquake in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir had serious implications for India in terms of renewal of the *jihadis'* image inside. Many reports and concerns have been raised in the national and international media on the role of *jihadi* forces in distributing relief aid and helping the local people in PoK. In recent years, the relationship between the *jihadis* and the locals in PoK became strained and was apparent. Most of the *jihadis* came from Pakistan, especially the provinces of Punjab and Sind, whose ways were not liked by the local population.²⁸

The earthquake is also likely to produce *jihadi* warriors in PoK. With the educational infrastructure damaged, there have been reports that *jihadi* forces are already working in full-swing for establishing *madrassas*. Islam in PoK has been relatively liberal and irrespective of violence, militant Islam was never established effectively. The mainstream schools have remained liberal so far; but the situation is likely to change now.²⁹ According to reports, along with infrastructure, teachers have also been killed. The likelihood of the *jihadi* forces or their political versions such as the *Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam* (JUI) establishing a parallel school system, dotted with *madrassas* cannot be underestimated. Besides providing fodder for their military machinery, quake rehabilitation is also likely to increase the financial position of the *jihadi* organizations in Pakistan. Aid and relief in various ways have started pouring in from all over the world, besides being mobilized at the national level. Enormous funds have already been mobilized inside and outside by many organizations. Given the unorganized nature of relief collection, the likelihood of *jihadi* organizations using the disaster to increase their financial position cannot be underestimated.³⁰

India's Options

What are India's options in dealing with Pakistan and its end game in Kashmir? For India, neither the Chenab formula nor regional referendum, especially in the Kashmir Valley or an "independent" Kashmir Valley would be acceptable. What would be (and should be) acceptable to India is a soft border, with no further territorial divisions and maximum autonomy to J&K as a whole with parallel "regional" autonomy to Jammu and Ladakh. India would have no problem in the movement of people and goods across the LoC, thus making it "soft". Demilitarization of Kashmir and demilitarization of Siachen are two issues, which could further be deliberated, depending on the forward movement at the ground level in terms of cross-border terrorism.

If demilitarization of Siachen would have to be used as a bargaining card to accept India's position on the above, then India should go ahead with the same. However demilitarization of Kashmir could be accepted, but in a phased manner, depending on overall improvement. But this should be a part of a larger final plan. This plan could include demilitarization and self-rule in those PoK and northern areas. Obviously, self-rule and

demilitarization could not be limited to only Kashmir on India's side. As a CBM on this issue, India could consider reduction of troops in a phased manner.³¹ The Prime Minister had earlier linked troop reduction with decline in violence.³² It is believed that General Musharraf in his meeting with Manmohan Singh in September 2005 at New York suggested the same to the latter. Finally, the plan should also have mechanisms to deal with cross-border terrorism, especially in terms of joint operations against militants and *jihadis*.

If the above could be India's endgame in Kashmir, then it should be pursued at two levels. First with Pakistan, led by General Musharraf. India should avoid getting bogged down under the discussion whether Musharraf could be trusted or not. If it is in India's interests and if Musharraf could deliver the goods, then he should be engaged, irrespective of him being trustworthy. Second, with Kashmiris internally, India should initiate a serious dialogue with various sections, including the Hurriyat on various issues especially on autonomy. In other words, India should aim at addressing two issues – the problem of Kashmir and the problem in Kashmir. India should understand that addressing the problem in Kashmir would automatically address the problem of Kashmir.

Engage General Musharraf Confidently

First, India should realize that the present military regime led by General Musharraf provides an opportunity. Opinion in India has been varied on this issue; critics have rightly questioned how India could trust a military man who was responsible for the Kargil conflict and the subsequent breaking of the Lahore process. India's approach towards Pakistan and Musharraf should be based on its national interests. At present, India has two specific interests – continuation of the peace process and containing cross-border terrorism. Both are essential for a successful dialogue at the New Delhi-Srinagar level ultimately leading to a stable and peaceful Kashmir in the near future. If General Musharraf could come forward on these two counts, then it would be in India's interest to deal with him.

It is unfortunate that in Pakistan there are other institutions or individuals who could support and provide stability to the bilateral peace process.³³ Both Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif have been thoroughly discredited by their own people. Even if they are allowed to return in the near future

(highly unlikely) and contest elections, the military would still run Pakistan's Kashmir policy. The political leadership in Pakistan is weak and would remain so in the near future. General Musharraf may not be a champion of Indo-Pak peace, but he is the only person who can implement what has been agreed upon at bilateral levels. Besides, General Musharraf is the only leader to publicly denounce the UN resolutions as irrelevant and suggest soft borders as a temporary solution. It is unlikely that any other political leader of any relevance could have made such a statement and withstood public opposition, especially by the Islamic Right. He may not be the right person, but he is a better option; until another leader – secular, military or religious – emerges in Pakistan, it would be in India's interest to engage Musharraf.³⁴

Areas of engagement have already been worked out; while there has been forward movement in certain areas, it has been slow on others. Issues such as Siachen and Sir Creek have witnessed no forward movement so far, while on communication links – air, land and sea, there have been considerable developments. The bus service between the two Kashmirs has been the boldest step that has been suggested and successfully pursued by India in recent years.

Increase Intra-Kashmiri Interaction

Allowing the Kashmiris to interact both at political and popular levels are in India's interests. Doubts and suspicions in terms of expanded intra-Kashmiri interaction would strengthen the self-determination slogan should have evaporated by now. The Kashmiris are divided politically and it is unlikely that except for a small minority, the rest would work against the bilateral process from moving further. Increased intra-Kashmiri interaction is likely to alienate the extremist and radical sections led by people like Syed Ali Geelani and Syed Salahudin. In the long term, this would also have implications on other *jihadi* organizations such as the *Lashkar-e-Toiba* and *Jaish-e-Mohammad*. India should seize this initiative and be willing to take bolder steps in increasing the contacts across the LoC.

Three specific areas need to be strengthened to increase intra-Kashmiri interactions. First, is to increase the number of bus services and also the routes, while simplifying the security-check process. As of now, India and Pakistan have agreed to initiate a bus service between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad. Stalled in between after the earthquake, the bus service has

resumed since December 2005. The bus service is more symbolic rather than of substance. The service needs to be increased and New Delhi should make efforts to open the Jhelum road.

Second, more than the movement of people, movement of goods would prove to be crucial from an Indian perspective. The traders in Kashmir are more eager to send their goods via the other side of Kashmir to reach markets in Pakistan and possibly Central Asia. The Kashmir Chambers of Commerce and Industry (KCCI), in particular, have been eager to explore avenues of trade on the other side of Kashmir. Independent traders, for example, the carpet weavers believe that the Kashmiris on the other side have better access to the global markets; hence selling through them would increase their profits. The apple traders in Sopore are eager to send their produce to and through PoK. The change in Sopore is an eye opener. The home town of separatist leader Syed Ali Geelani, Sopore has always been the leading town next to Srinagar in holding to their leaders' fanatical beliefs on independence. During the 2002 elections, Sopore polled the least, around 5 per cent. Geelani has been most vocal against the bus service and intra-Kashmiri interaction. The change in Sopore is bound to reflect elsewhere in the Valley, once the economic interaction is intensified between the two Kashmirs. The hotel owners in the Boulevard and the Shikara owners in the Dal and Nagin Lakes believe that they would be able to attract more tourists from Pakistan and PoK, if more routes are operationalized and more services introduced.³⁵

In an interview, the KCCI chairman mentioned that the organizations have submitted their willingness to the PMO to visit PoK to explore the possibilities, but is still to receive a response. The government should actively encourage such visits.

Engage Kashmiris in an Internal Dialogue

India's Kashmir policy is more externally focused than internally. While, on the one hand, India has been claiming Kashmir as an integral part of the country, on the other hand, most of its policies have been focused on cross-border terrorism and improving Indo-Pak bilateral ties. It is imperative that India initiates a serious discussion between New Delhi and Srinagar to begin with, and then expand it to New Delhi-Jammu and New Delhi-Leh levels. Simultaneously, New Delhi should also encourage discussions and

dialogues at official and unofficial levels between Jammu, Srinagar and Len. Any understanding at these levels would automatically reduce the impact of cross-border terrorism and the shrill note that Pakistan could instil in the Indo-Pak peace process. In other words, India's road to Islamabad should run through Srinagar. Before that, New Delhi's road to Srinagar should run through Jammu and Leh. The second would make the journey on the first politically rewarding and comfortable.

A dialogue with Kashmir should be conducted at multilateral levels and not only at any particular segment. Under Vajpayee's government, the engagement took place mainly at New Delhi and National Conference level. Under the Congress government now, the engagement mainly seems to be taking place at New Delhi, PDP, and State Congress level. The National Conference, separatist leaders both inside and outside the Hurriyat and minor regional parties and leaders in Jammu and Ladakh have been largely ignored. In Kashmir Valley, besides the Congress and the PDP, political forces include the National Conference and the two factions of the Hurriyat along with leaders such as Yasin Malik and Shabbir Shah occupy the political space. This group needs to be engaged.

The National Conference has been articulating autonomy for Kashmir, but within the framework of the Indian Constitution. New Delhi has committed itself to the same issue and in the last decade, there were numerous statements at the highest levels.³⁶ But when the National Conference government passed a resolution in the J&K legislative assembly on autonomy, the Union Cabinet did not even discuss it. It was not that the entire J&K was unanimous in the demand for autonomy. Jammuities, Pandits and the Buddhists in Ladakh and parties such as the BJP and Congress (I) did not agree with the NC on autonomy and publicly opposed the move.³⁷

Besides the debate on autonomy, another area where efforts have been ad hoc is on whether to talk or not to the separatists led by the two factions of the Hurriyat and those leaders outside it. Ever since the release of Hurriyat leaders in April 2000, New Delhi's efforts in initiating and sustaining a dialogue has been subject to a series of ad hoc mores and discontinuities. The leaders were released in April 2000, but no effort was made to initiate a dialogue with them. In July 2000, the government decided to speak to the *Hizbul Mujahideen* but the effort did not materialize.³⁸ The main issue, seems to be whether or not to speak to the Hurriyat. Though split in factions

vertically and horizontally and consisting of some opportunist leaders, the Hurriyat amalgam occupies an important political space between militancy and the moderate demand for an independent Kashmir or maximum autonomy.³⁹ Engaging the Hurriyat is in India's interests, especially the moderates led by Mirwaiz Farooq. This would give New Delhi the much needed political bargaining strength vis-à-vis the militants, extremist faction and also Pakistan.

A dialogue with NC, moderate Hurriyat and leaders including Yasin Malik and Shabbir Shah on autonomy, self-rule or self-governance could be a starting point. Pakistan has already made a statement on the same issue and Mirwaiz Farooq was quoted recently that he would be willing to discuss with Pakistan.⁴⁰

To conclude, India should enlarge its focus in terms of addressing the conflict. It should address both the problem of Kashmir and the problem in Kashmir. While engaging General Musharraf for the former is essential, in terms of sustaining the peace process, engaging the Kashmiris for the latter is even more important. Without addressing the latter, India can never be able to sustain any engagement on the former.

Endnotes

- ¹ See the following for an understanding of Pakistan's perceptions of what would be its end game: Haqqani, Hussain. 2003. 'Pakistan's Endgame in Kashmir', in Sumit Ganguly, ed., *The Kashmir Question: Retrospect and Prospect*. London: Frank Cass, pp. 34–54; Hussain, Ijaz. 1998. *Kashmir Dispute: An International Law Perspective*. Islamabad: National Institute of Pakistan Studies; Sattar, Abdul. 1997. 'Fifty Years of Kashmir Dispute: The Diplomatic Aspect', in Suroosh Irfani, ed. *Fifty Years of the Kashmir Dispute*. Muzaffarabad: University of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, pp. 10–30; Cheema, Pervaiz Iqbal. 1992. 'Pakistan's Kashmir Policy', in S.M. Haider, ed. *Kashmir and South Asian Security*. Rawalpindi: FRIENDS Publications, pp. 27–74; and Siddiqua-Agha, Ayesha. 2000. 'War without End: Can Pakistan afford to maintain the status quo on its Kashmir policy?', *Peace Initiatives*, July–December, vol. VI, nos. IV–VI, pp. 158–163.
- ² See 'Srinagar, Budgam dists witness poor voting', *The Tribune*, 26 September 2002; 'Srinagar gives a thumbs down to Election 2002' [Online: web] URL: <http://www.rediff.com/election/2002/sep/24jk4.htm>; and 'Rural voter turnout higher', *The Tribune*, 26 September 2002.
- ³ On 18 December 2003, General Musharraf stated, "We are for United Nations Security Council Resolutions. However, now we have left that aside If we

want to resolve this issue, both sides need to talk to each other with flexibility, coming beyond stated positions, meeting halfway somewhere. We are prepared to rise to the occasion, India has to be flexible also." See 'Pakistan offers to drop plebiscite demand', *The News*, 19 December 2003. Also see 'Ready to set aside UN resolution: Musharraf' [Online: web] URL: <http://www.rediff.com/news/2003/dec/18pak2.htm>.

- 4 According to the August 1948 UNSC resolution, "Government of India and the Government of Pakistan reaffirm their wish that the future status of the State of Jammu and Kashmir shall be determined in accordance with the will of the people and to that end, upon acceptance of the truce agreement, both governments agree to enter into consultations with the Commission to determine fair and equitable conditions whereby such free expression will be assured."
- 5 See 'Kashmir: The View from Islamabad', *Asia Report* N°68, 4 December 2003 [Online: web] URL: <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=2407&l=1>
- 6 According to the MORI poll, "On the issue of citizenship, overall, 61 per cent said they felt they would be better off politically and economically as an Indian citizen and only 6 per cent as a Pakistani citizen, but 33 per cent said they did not know." See 'Kashmiris Reject War in Favour of Democratic Means', 31 May 2002 [Online: web] URL: <http://www.mori.com/polls/2002/kashmir.shtml>. Also see 'Majority would opt for Indian citizenship, says poll', *The Guardian*, 1 June 2002 [Online: web] URL: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/kashmir/Story/0,2763,725986,00.html>
- 7 'Kashmiris Reject War in Favour of Democratic Means', 31 May 2002 [Online: web] URL: <http://www.mori.com/polls/2002/kashmir.shtml>
- 8 Even inside Pakistan many agree that the UN resolutions have become obsolete and that neither OIC nor China would support the plebiscite option. See Haider, Iqbal. 2004. 'In search of solution', *The News*, 1 January.
- 9 It is possible that the "LoC Plus" and "Chenab Formula" are two totally distinct ideas that Pakistan may have. However based on open literature, it appears that both are synonymous.
- 10 Niaz Naik and R.K. Mishra met confidentially as special emissaries of Nawaz Sharif and Atal Bihari Vajpayee respectively during March-June 1999. Niaz Naik later revealed in an interview to Robert Wirsing about the Chenab formula. See Wirsing, Robert G. 2003. *Kashmir in the Shadow of War: Regional Rivalries in a Nuclear Age*. London: ME Sharpe, pp. 25-33.
- 11 *Ibid.*, p. 28.
- 12 'Sikandar defends "Chenab formula"', *Dawn*, 24 May 2003; 'Sardar Sikandar backs Chenab formula on Kashmir', *The Greater Kashmir*, 28 July 2003.
- 13 'Time to consider Kashmir options: Musharraf', *Daily Times*, 26 October 2004.
- 14 'Kashmir can erupt again if not resolved: Musharraf', *Daily Times*, 19 April 2005.

- ¹⁵ 'I'm making LoC irrelevant: Musharraf', *The Hindu*, 31 October 2005.
- ¹⁶ Though these *jihadi* groups are against India and their activities aimed at destabilizing the country, the objectives of these attacks are more religious than political. Their hostility towards "Hindu" India should be seen along with their perceptions towards the "Jewish" Israel. Claims regarding overthrowing the Indian national flag from the Red Fort in New Delhi are a part of radical and religious agenda and not political.
- ¹⁷ For an excellent documentation of these attacks, see the website of the Institute of Conflict Management, New Delhi which has been tabulating all violent incidents in Pakistan along with other countries of South Asia. It publishes an electronic weekly – *South Asia Intelligence Review*, which lists these attacks. See [Online: web] URL: www.satp.org.
- ¹⁸ Musharraf's idea of "self-rule" would ultimately take the position of an autonomous Kashmir, where Pakistan would have a say and not under India's total control. It appears that Musharraf has purposefully left the statement vague.
- ¹⁹ 'Kashmir: The View from Islamabad', n.5.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*
- ²¹ These issues have been discussed elsewhere. See Chandran, D. Suba. 2001. 'Why Kargil?', in P.R. Chari and Maj. Gen. Ashok Krishna. eds. *Kargil: The Tables Turned*, New Delhi: Manohar Publishers.
- ²² In September 2005, the Jammu University hosted "Heart-to-Heart Talks" which was attended by more than 30 leaders from PoK; Earlier a group of journalists visited Jammu and Kashmir and discussed various issues with a vast spectrum of people and groups.
- ²³ For example, Mirwaiz Farooq gave concrete shape to his ideas and proposed "United States of Kashmir" in November 2005. Though the idea was rejected by some Kashmiri leaders on the other side, the fact is the moderate section is willing to look into alternatives. See 'Mirwaiz proposes "United States of Kashmir"', *Dawn*, 17 November 2005.
- ²⁴ 'Consider demilitarization of J&K: Hurriyat', *The Indian Express*, 28 November 2005.
- ²⁵ 'Hurriyat dove Mirwaiz Farooq unveils Kashmir roadmap', *The Indian Express*, 30 November 2005.
- ²⁶ 'Independent Kashmir not possible in 100 years: Qayoom', *Daily Excelsior*, 27 September 2005.
- ²⁷ While the moderate faction has considerably changed its perceptions after the earthquake, Geelani still maintains the same perspectives. See 'Geelani rejects self-governance', *Daily Excelsior*, 7 December 2005; 'Geelani rejects third option', *Daily Excelsior*, 13 December 2005; 'Azadi the only way: Geelani', *Greater Kashmir*, 9 November 2005.

- 28 In recent years, there have been two excellent publications on *jihadis*, their operations, factions and the level of local support. See Rana, Mohammad Amir. 2003. *Gateway to Terrorism*. London: New Millennium and Mir, Amir. 2004. *The True Face of Jihadis*. Lahore: Mashal Books.
- 29 Chandran, D. Suba. 2005. 'Tectonic Shift', *The Statesman*, 28 October.
- 30 *Ibid.*
- 31 The Indian Chief of Army Staff himself recently suggested troops reduction. See "Troops reduction can be considered: Army chief," *Daily Excelsior*, 8 October 2005.
- 32 'PM for troops cut if violence ceases', *Daily Excelsior*, 6 September 2005.
- 33 This argument has been made elsewhere. See Chandran, D. Suba. 2005. 'Can Musharraf be trusted? Engage him until a better option arises', 27 April [Online: web] URL: <http://www.ipcs.org/newKashmirLevel2.jsp?action=showView&kValue=1731&subCatID=null&mod=null>
- 34 *Ibid.*
- 35 The above section is based on the author's personal interactions with various groups in Kashmir representing social and economic sections.
- 36 Mulayam Singh Yadav, the then Defence Minister, announced in Srinagar on 24 June 1996, "Only the implementation part of our promise of maximum autonomy remains and we will bring forward a bill in the coming session of parliament to make it a reality." See Swami, Praveen. 1996. 'For democratic change: The need for popular government in Kashmir', *Frontline*, 26 July, p. 44. On 3 August 2000, Vajpayee, the then Prime Minister announced in Srinagar that *insaniyat* would be the limit to deal with issues.
- 37 The opponents of autonomy cited various reasons. See. Bhat, R.L. 2000. 'Will autonomy solve anything?', *The Daily Excelsior*, 24 June; Singh, Jitendra. 2000. 'Is "autonomy" the real issue?' *Daily Excelsior*, 25 June; Singh, Brahma. 2000. 'Autonomy not in the people's interest', *Daily Excelsior*, 02 July; Dattatray, Omkar. 2000. 'Autonomy-Legalizing Secession', *Daily Excelsior*, 02 July.
- 38 The *Hizbul Mujahideen* announced a cease fire on its own in July 2000, initially without any preconditions. New Delhi agreed to the same; however when Salahuddin insisted on a trilateral dialogue including Pakistan and gave an ultimatum, the effort collapsed.
- 39 Chandran, D. Suba. 2003. 'New Initiatives in Kashmir', *IPCS Issue Brief 13*, November.
- 40 Mirwaiz Farooq made the following statement by the end of December before his visit to PoK and Pakistan: "We will discuss self-rule for united Kashmir and other proposals like demilitarization with the Pakistan leaders during our visit. It is our belief that self-rule is not an alternative, but it could be the beginning for resolving the Kashmir dispute." See 'Hurriyat to discuss self-rule with Musharraf: Umar', *Greater Kashmir*, 1 January 2005.